

Matthew 21-05-09b

Thank you Dan and Anna and Lori for our special music today, How Great Their Art. We were just talking about that on the break and how beautiful and apropos it is. We're affirmed in our faith many times after we have chosen God, after we choose to believe, we choose to change our minds based on divine revelation.

It gives God the freedom to speak to us in personal ways and in meaningful and even tangible ways because that isn't the spark for our faith, it is an affirmation and a confirmation of the faith that already exists. We're going to see that coming up in Matthew. I'm not giving away any surprises.

If you look ahead a page or so, this same Simon Peter is going to be on top of the Mount of Transfiguration and he is going to see Moses and he is going to see Elijah. Why? Not to engender belief and to create faith, but because he has already responded to what the Father in heaven has revealed. And that response, that choice, that belief comes first.

It's like Jesus said way back in the teaching on the hill, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. As we resume our study, you remember right before the break and we looked some of this up on the break. I have great great church members here with wonderful questions and observations and we benefit from them, but we talked about the redemption that Cleopas and his companion were looking for and hoping for in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you go to Luke chapter 2 and look at the closing verses in that chapter with Simeon and with Anna, Simeon anticipated the light to the that Christ would be. Anna shared her recognition of the infant Lord Jesus with all of those who were looking for redemption. Redemption.

It's one of the last verses in Luke chapter 2. Anna and others were looking for redemption. It's at the beginning of the life of the Lord Jesus. It's at the end of the life.

Those who recognize that were then given. They were already looking for redemption. They understood that this was the real purpose of the Christ.

He wasn't going to be a political power. He wasn't going to be a physical deliverer primarily. He was primarily going to be a redeemer looking for redemption.

This is solving the sin problem, reconciliation with God, making possible the fulfillment of all of God's promises for presence and blessing. So as we resume our study now, we're looking at Matthew chapter 16, verse 18. Jesus says, not only are you blessed, Simeon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven, it is those who are blessed that gain this supernatural revelation.

Peter doesn't do this right after he sees yet another healing miracle or yet another storm

that is still or yet another crowd that is fed. Jesus says, who do you say that I am? He doesn't say, can you give me a quick review of my miracles? What conclusion do you draw from these miracles? Who do you say that I am? And you can't help but note and you can circle it. I am.

I am is a pregnant statement in scripture. It goes back to Moses at Sinai. When the people asked me who has sent me to deliver them, Moses questions, what name shall I give? Who shall I say has commissioned me to come and deliver them from bondage and slavery in Egypt? God says, you tell them I am has sent you.

Who do you say that I am? I am, it's is very close to the divine personal covenant name, Yahweh. It is comprised of most of the same component parts. I am.

Who do you say that I am? Peter says, you are the Christ. You are the anointed one. And the question is anointed for what? Jesus is anointed for three separate offices, right? He is prophet.

He is priest. Remember Moses said there will come another prophet, capital P, who will prophesy, who will deliver the word of God from heaven. He not only presents that word, he embodies that word.

He is that word. John 1, 1 through 14, the word became flesh and among us. Jesus taught it.

He embodied it. He expressed it. And Peter recognizes that you are the anointed prophet.

You are the anointed priest. He is the high priest. Now, I'm not saying Peter understood all of these things in detail at this point, but we understand from the full revelation of scripture that Jesus is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

You've got a detailed ritual shadow in Leviticus of how the high priest was commissioned and the anointing that he received and the functions that he performed in representing God's people in God's presence. Christ has a greater high priesthood, one that was a predecessor to the Levitical priesthood represented by Abraham meeting Melchizedek and sharing bread and wine. The same elements that Jesus is going to share with his disciples in the upper room, bread and wine, Melchizedek, anointed priesthood.

And he is the anointed king. He is the son of David. When you say Mashiach, that means anointed.

Anointed for what? Anointing was part of commissioning. It was a part of recognition. It was a part of sanctification.

It was a part of preparation. And the Lord Jesus is all three of those things in one. The

anointed prophet, the anointed priest, the anointed king, the anointed one.

So blessed are you flesh and blood has not revealed this, but my father who is in heaven, verse 18. And I also say to you that you are Petras. You are a stone P E T R O S. You are a stone.

And upon this Petra, P E T R A, massive rock formation, I will build my church, my Ecclesia. And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. What is Jesus saying here? You have three choices when it comes to what Jesus is going to build his assembly on.

Ecclesia simply means assembly. Nobody has a notion of church the way Paul is going to employ it in the epistles after Pentecost. The word Ecclesia is only used twice before Pentecost.

Here in Matthew's account, it occurs here and it occurs in 1817, which we will soon see. This is if your brother has sinned against you, uh, approach him once, twice, thrice. And if he still will not be reconciled, treat him like he even in the tax collector, we'll get to that.

But here and there are the only places in Matthew you find this word Ecclesia. And it simply means go to the assembled group. They could be assembled for any purpose.

A really good translation for this would be assembly throughout the new Testament. Church has gained so much baggage and carries such connotations that Ecclesia, this is just a called together group could be for any purpose. It could be to be a jury.

It could be to be witnesses to a ceremony or an event, uh, but called together for a special purpose. That's what an Ecclesia is. It's a called out group subset of the masses.

This is a particularized called out group for some purpose. Jesus says, I will build my called out group on this rock formation. So what is the rock formation? What is the Petra? Is it the Petras Peter? That's the first choice.

This is the view of the Catholic church that the whole church is built on. Peter, the Petras and the Petra are the same thing. Any first year Greek student can do a little research, read the references, read the, uh, the lexicons.

They are not the same thing. Petras is a stone. It is a rock, a loose rock.

You can build something on a Petras Petra was used of a large rock formation, a gigantic stone ledge on which you could walk on, which you could build. Uh, this is Grand Canyon size, rock formations. Um, you remember if you've seen National Geographic, or now you can look at it online, there is a city carved out of the side of a deep ravine in solid rock, uh, over in the middle East.

And what is its name? It is not Petras. They don't call it the city of Petras. Do they, what do they call it? The city of Petra P E T R A because it is gigantic.

I've seen pictures of it. I've seen snapshots of it. I haven't ever been there myself.

But that's Petra think big, big, big stone, big enough to serve as a foundation. Certainly. So what is this Petra? If it is not Petras, if it's not Peter himself, then our second choice would be when he says on this Petra, and he could be referring to himself, he could be, well, you say I am the Christ and on this Christ rock, I will build my church.

Nothing intrinsically wrong with that, but it's a bit odd in the context because if it's kind of like Jesus saying, uh, blessed are you Simon. And I say to you that you are a little rock. And on this big rock, I will build my church.

Uh, you can't really get as far as you're a chip off the old block. Uh, it's, it's an odd transition to say you're a little rock. I'm big rock.

I'm going to build my church on the big rock. And you're left to say, well, why are you talking about me as a little rock? Um, it's, it's an odd thought progression to simply move to that alone. A preferable choice in my view.

And I think in the view of others, I'm far from alone in this is that it is the truth of the anointing of Christ, IE his identity as God's anointed. Remember even the demons, when they start speaking and Jesus tells them to be quiet and they say, we know who you are. You are the holy one of God.

You're the one that God has sent, that God has commissioned, that God has anointed, anointed things are holy. Nothing that isn't holy gets anointed in the old Testament ritual system. Only sanctified things, only purified things, only holy things are anointed.

They have been cleansed. They have been prepared. Then they are anointed.

So the holy one of God is very close to the anointed one of God. The demons know that's who Jesus is. Peter knows who that is.

And it is that recognition, that truth that Jesus is the Christ that is going to be the foundation for this new assembly, this new congregation, this new called out and called together group. So can it be Israel? What is the foundation for Israel? Is Israel built on this rock, this Petra? Is the nation of Israel built on the rock of Christ or even the recognition of the coming Christ? Is that what Israel was built on? It's an interesting question worth thinking about, but I'll save you the time. No, Israel as a nation was not built on the spiritual rock that followed them.

You can't be built on something that is following you, right? In Hebrews, it tells us they ate the same spiritual food. They drank the same spiritual drink. They drank from that rock that followed them and that rock was Christ.

So they weren't built on it. What are they built on? A different kind of stone. What is the

stone? We just saw this on Thursday night.

What is the stone that was still in the ark of the covenant when Solomon built the temple of glory in Jerusalem? The two tables of stone. That's the stone Israel is built on. The covenant at Sinai, the decree and the law that was delivered through Moses at Sinai, that's the foundation for the nation of Israel.

Why is it that we do not try to keep the law? We don't do all of the ordinances and rituals and those things that were forbidden and those things that were allowed, whether it's clothing or food or feasts and observances and sacrifices. Why do we not do that? We are not built on those stones. We are built on a different stone.

Our Petra is not the one that was encased in the ark of the covenant. Different stone. We are not held to commands that were written on tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart, Paul is going to say.

Remember that? It's a memorable phrase, fleshy tables of the heart. We are built on recognition of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that separates us and makes us unique and distinct from Israel.

Included in those tables of stone representing the decrees and the commands and the covenants of God is the millennial kingdom. The millennial kingdom is a part of that foundation of stone and covenant and promise that defines Israel in the Old Testament. The millennial kingdom concludes and fulfills that covenant with that group.

It is not a central part of our covenant. So what part is it? Well, we're about to find out. I also say to you, you are Peter, you are a stone and on this ledge of what you recognize.

What's great about this is why is Peter a stone? Why does Jesus connect Petras and Petra here? He's not defining what he is going to build on the foundation of himself. He's not basing himself on Peter. He's not founding himself and his assembly on Peter.

He says, you represent, you are a small reflection. And so it is sort of the chip off the block motif. The block is bigger than the chip.

But Peter, by this confession is defined by and looks like that which Christ is. The great high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus is going to be talking to his father and saying, I in them and I and you in me. And there is this identification of the father, the son, and those who belong to the son as integral to one another.

And Jesus says that confession, that recognition, that revelation that you have chosen to believe from my father in heaven, you look like the foundation that this entire called out assembly is going to be based on. You're a small representation of that large permanent truth. You're a little reflection.

You're a little sample of this large thing. It is the Petra that defines the Petras. In other words, it makes sense.

The big stone, the big foundation, the identity of Christ, his words, his work, his personhood defines Peter. You're Petras. You're a little chunk of this thing that I'm going to build my whole assembly on.

You're blessed. You're a reflection. That's what we should be.

We are the body of Christ. We are small representations of what Jesus Christ himself, he is not defined by us. Say, well, if you want to see Christ, just look at me.

No, hopefully when you look at me, you will see small representation, a glass darkly reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the reality and is the perfection and is the large thing. I can only be a small representation, a small reflection of the greatness and the wonder and the true awesomeness of the Lord Jesus. If I can just be a small rock, I have fulfilled my destiny as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If I can be a Petras, just a small sample of the Petra. That's why we're here. He has left.

We're here in his place and each of us. And who is it that tells us about this over in 1 Peter 2? Flip over there. I've seen it many times.

1 Peter 2, but this really illuminates the scene here. 1 Peter 2, starting at verse 5, actually verse 4, coming to him as to a living stone, coming to Jesus as to a living stone, rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious. Who do men say that I am? Well, they don't say you're the Christ rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious.

You are the holy one of God. You are the anointed one of God. You are the chosen one of God and valuable beyond price.

You also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. We've been seeing this on Thursday night. What does it mean to build the temple for us? It is a place of presence.

It is a place of worship. It is a place of sacrifice. Sacrifices, spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Therefore it is contained in the scriptures. Behold, I lay in Zion, a chief cornerstone, elect and precious. He who believes on him will by no means be put to shame.

He who believes. Not going to be short changed, not going to be embarrassed, not going to be disappointed, never be put to shame. Therefore to you who believe he is precious.

One of the things about stone is it's as real as anything in this physical world gets. Even science will believe in past things that they cannot see when it is the record in the rocks.

It's the fossil record, the stone record.

Science has to contend with the record of the rocks. To you who believe he is precious. To you who believe he is substantial.

To you who believe he is as real as stone. Belief. What does Paul say in Hebrews 6? Faith makes substantial what you cannot see.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. What did Cleopas and his friend tell Jesus they were hoping for? What was Anna and her circle of acquaintance looking for? Redemption. Redemption is a concept, but the Redeemer is real.

He is flesh and blood. He is seated in heaven at the right hand of the father. And it is our faith that makes him as real as stone.

You are Petras on this Petra, this reality of the anointing of the Lord Jesus as prophet, priest, and king. We as an assembly will be built. Notice he says, will be built.

It's not happening. He doesn't say I am building it to Peter, does he? He says, I will build it. It's a future thing.

It's not present national Israel. It's not the present group of disciples. He doesn't say I am building you into my assembly.

He says, I will build it. This is the truth on which it will be built. So it includes all of those passages that talk about Christ as the rock.

And that is Romans 9.33. That is Ephesians 2.20. That is what we just saw in 1 Peter 2.5-8. It is the truth of that confession. And then he concludes, and this is our last thought for the morning, the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I was smiling.

I think I was talking to my mother the other day about these signs. You travel the roads here and they're up and down. They're very hilly.

Visibility is limited. And if you're trying to go to the Dollar General down here by foil, you come up to the top of a hill and there's a sign that says, dangerous driveway, dangerous driveway. And I think, what is this driveway going to, this asphalt, this gravel is going to leap up and break my windshield, grab me by the neck and pull me out of my car.

The driveway is going to somehow rise up and push me into the bar ditch. How can the drive, should I not turn down this driveway? I should never visit these people because their driveway is dangerous. Are there giant sinkholes in it? How can it be a dangerous driveway? Well, in the same way, and you know the answer to that question, right? Be careful.

Somebody might pull out of this driveway. There might be a dangerous resident that's

about to come out of their driveway when you're not looking and you could have a collision. You could T-bone one or the other of you.

So what does it mean when Jesus says the gates of Hades, am I worried about when I walk by a gate, am I waiting for the gate to somehow overcome me and rise up in the air and smack me down to the ground? And what's dangerous about a gate? Why would I be worried that a gate would prevail against me? We've figured out that we are this assembly built on the rock and that it is our faith that makes that rock real to us. I don't need to put my finger into the scars. I don't need to watch Jesus eat a piece of broiled fish or an honeycomb.

Why? Faith is the substance. Belief makes him real. I know my Redeemer lives.

I know whom I have believed, Paul says. I'm persuaded. He doesn't say, you know, I would have never believed if Jesus had to come and smack me to the ground on the road to Damascus.

I know whom I have believed. Faith makes spiritual truth substantial, makes it as real as rock. And the gates of Hades will not prevail.

What on earth does this mean? Well, very quickly and a little bit of isagogical research helps. Patty knows why my tongue is twisted. The gates of Hades to the Jews was a synonym for death.

When you die, you go to the shady Sheol underworld, which was known as Hades in Greek. When Jesus spoke this in Aramaic, he probably said the gates of Sheol, which is the abode of the dead. It was the shadowy, don't know much about it place where the dead must be because they're not here.

They did not have a concept of Abraham's bosom. They had a concept of Sheol, read the Psalms, read David talking about the death of his first son with Bathsheba before Solomon is born. So the gates of Sheol will not prevail.

What does it mean? Well, it's not, we're going to go down there and attack those gates and they won't, they won't survive. These are not gates keeping people out. They are gates that keep people in.

And when the Lord Jesus builds his assembly on the foundation of his prophetic, priestly, and royal anointing, Sheol slash Hades will not be able to keep the dead in. Why? What does Jesus say in the first chapter of the book of Revelation? I am the Alpha and the Omega, and I have the what? I have the keys of Hades and of death. I have the keys of Hades and of death.

How can the gates prevail if Jesus has got the key to unlock them? How can death constrain and keep in his called out ones? They can't. The gates of Hades will not prevail.

They will not keep the dead in.

This is a promise, a declaration of resurrection for the Lord Jesus called out group. Isn't that great? The gates of Hades will not prevail. This group is busting out because the rock on which it is built is life itself.

He has broken the power. Who is it that has the power of sin and of death? Remember in Paul, he talks about the one who had the power of sin and death, Satan, and he is defeated. He was defeated at the cross, which is in the near future to these statements.

So what a wonderful hope we have. It is confidence made substantial, made into stone, made into a foundation stone for our thinking, for our decisions, for how we use our time, how we act toward one another, how we think toward ourselves and toward the world is built on the knowledge that life is not confined to this world and it doesn't end when we die. The defining principle of our church, our assembly, that which is built on the foundation of Christ is it's eternal.

It goes forever. It's not the mere consequences in this life. It's not recognition in this life.

It's not accomplishment in this life. It's not success or failure in this life. It is where do we end up in the future? This life is merely a shadow, a training ground, a preparation for the reality which is to come.

Our faith recognizes that reality and that reality becomes rock. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully the words of the Lord Jesus speak to our souls in the hands of the Holy Spirit, give us comfort and strength and encouragement, direction, guidance to discern the better things and to understand what is your good and acceptable and perfect will.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths that we can be small representative pieces of that wonderful rock that is your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. And in doing so, we can shine as lights in the midst of our generation. And those who see our hope will ask us what the reason for it is.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.